

THE GENESEE LIGHTHOUSE
LAKE AVENUE, ROCHESTER, MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK

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28-ROCH,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT NY2 CENTRAL NEW YORK

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WALTER H. CASSEBEER-DISTRICT OFFICER
84 EXCHANGE STREET ROCHESTER NEW YORK

HABS
N.Y.,
28-Rochester,
10-

THE GENESEE LIGHTHOUSE
LAKE AVENUE, ROCHESTER, MONROE COUNTY, NEW YORK?

OWNER: The United States Government

OCCUPANT: George V. Coddington and wife, Lighthouse Keeper

DATE OF ERECTION: 1822

ARCHITECT: Unknown

BUILDER: William Carroll of Braddocks Bay, Monroe Co.

PRESENT CONDITION: The building is still in fair state of preservation but needs attention or it will be beyond repair. The masonry walls need repointing badly, particularly on the south and westerly sides. The sash are partly gone and all glazing is broken. The entrance door lock should be rekeyed. The wood superstructure is partly gone and needs a new paper roof. The interior is in good state except for signaturred walls. Cast iron stairs is in perfect condition but needs paint. The original lanterns and metal superstructure have long since been removed. Both exterior and interior were painted white.

NUMBER OF STORIES: There is no cellar or basement. From the first or ground floor level a well extends up the top which is domed. This has a cast iron stairs having two landings. An iron stair ladder extends from the second landing to the lantern deck. Above this the lantern housing originally stood. The height above the base was originally thirty-nine feet. The height above water level is eighty-one feet.

MATERIALS OF CONSTRUCTION: The foundation and exterior walls are laid up in rubble masonry of local Medina sandstone, probably secured up the Genesee river at the lower falls or from outcroppings located at Braddock's Bay, about five miles westerly along the shore of the lake. The stones of the watertable and top courses are dressed Medina sandstone, probably from quarries in Medina, Orleans County and brought in by team along the old Military Road, now the Lewiston Road. The ground floor is of local red brick and the entire interior has a brick core up to the upper landing. This was probably built in when the building was refitted in 1855. The stairs is cast iron. The ladder from upper landing to deck is wrought iron. One rung of this ladder is marked "V.R." and a crown indicating possibly British origin. The deck is built of four cast iron plates bolted together. The hatch door is also cast iron. The rail is wrought iron. The present housing at the top is wood covered with tar paper.

OTHER EXISTING RECORDS:

Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York, 1860
Rochester Times Union, June 28, 1928
" " " July 12, 1934
Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, July 28, 1935
Centennial History of Rochester, Rochester Historical
Society, Vol II.

ADDITIONAL DATA:

The building is locally known as the Charlotte Lighthouse, being located in the former village of Charlotte, now a part of Rochester. It is located at Latitude 43°-15'-09.64" and Longitude 77°-33'-39.10", on the west bank of the Genesee River, a considerable distance back from the present shore of Lake Ontario, on a rising piece of ground. It once served as a lake coast and harbor light.

The Albany Gazette of February 21, 1821 has an account of a proposal to erect a lighthouse on the east shore of the river, and called for the purchase of six acres of land. On February 21, 1821 Monroe county was set aside from part of Ontario County. A year later the building was erected on the west shore of the river, in Monroe County.

The property is part of Lot 28, Division 3, Township 2, Short Range of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. It was sold to Joseph Amim and in Nov. 5, 1794 sold by him to William Hencher. Hencher settled there in 1792 as the first white man on the west side of the river. The property was set off in October 4, 1804. It was almost entirely tree covered. Hencher died and the property fell to his wife, Mehitabel Hencher, November 3, 1812. She sold to the United States Government by deed dated Nov 17, 1821 and recorded March 25, 1822, in Libre 1, page 463 of Monroe County Deeds, New York State. The purchase price was \$400, for three and one quarter acres. The building was built under contract by William Carroll with the U.S. Government and under supervision of the Fifth Auditor of the General Government.

The cabin of Hencher stood on the site where the present brick keeper's house now stands. Giles Holden erected his own house on that spot. Holden was the first keeper and when he was succeeded he took his frame house with him to the west side of Lake Avenue. The original lighthouse cost five thousand dollars. The present keepers house was erected in 1863.

In 1829 the State cleared about 260 acres of trees and brush from the land to the land to the north and west to the lighthouse, and awarded damages to owners of \$218.20. In 1832 a beacon was erected at the end of what was then a pier. In 1834 two piers were built at the mouth of the river and several beacons and lights erected thereon from time to time. The most recent lighthouse, built in 1931 cost \$14000.

The first light was a fixed light of 10 oil lamps and ten reflectors according to a report of 1838. The lantern had eight sides with fifteen small panes of glass in each panel. The cowl above was semi-spherical. By 1860 a fixed light of the fourth order and a fourth order lens with a visibility of fourteen nautical miles was placed, probably when the house was refitted. This light was the one in place when the use was discontinued in 1880. It was removed in 1881, when a wooden top was probably built. A room in the south east corner of the keepers house, on the first floor was used as the oil room and there was a door and porch at the east end thereof, possibly connected with the light-house. At present this opening is replaced by a window and the room no longer so used. The keeper's house was erected of brick in 1853. A frame porch was added to the north west corner in 1933.

The Lighthouse Keepers in order of succession were:

Giles H. Holden, 1822-1834

Osborn Hanford

Peter Hillman

Martello Warner

Cuyler Cook

Samuel Phillips, 1853-

Henry Newcomb

Luther Jafford

John Stevenson

William Wilder

Francis Downing

Del Budd

Rawson Smith

Alonzo Cory

Richard Tongs

George V. Coddington, 1913-

The above information was contributed by Roscoe House, Superintendent of Lighthouses, 10th District, Buffalo, N.Y., By Mrs. Emma M. Pollard Greer of Charlotte, Rochester, N.Y. and the writer.

Walter H. Cassebeer
District Officer NY2
October 17, 1936